

Backflipping through the ages

By Ari Houston

Let's take it back, way back to the time when fresh minted cars took over the streets and the sound of jazz played throughout the night: This was the birth of cheerleading.

Cheerleading first began in the 1880s when a male student from Princeton College started chanting at a game against the University of Michigan. Only men were in college at that time so female cheerleaders didn't start performing until 1923.

Fast forward to Perry High School in the 1976.

Julie Boyd was a cheerleader for Perry when the school first split from Southport. She reminisced that things were different back then because "the only requirement was the splits."

Boyd goes on to say that only one girl could tumble, the only choreography were the moves to the fight song and the team "didn't do any dancing."

But now, cheering is only a small part of cheerleading. The four basic concepts in cheerleading are cheering, dancing, stunting and gymnastics.

What is stunting?

Stunting is where cheerleaders

make pyramids, and they also throw and catch one another as "flyers," and "bases," said cheer coach Dede Sims. During practice, Sims explained how much flyers have to trust the bases, who are the only thing separating the flyers from the floor.

Each flyer must keep her body rigid so that she is easy to catch and doesn't harm herself or her bases.

Training hard and following the rules is critical. Otherwise, cheerleaders end up with broken bones, concussions and, in extreme situations, paralyzed, Sims said.

The girls now practice six days a week, focusing on perfecting routines and choreography.

"We really do put in so much effort throughout the season," said senior co-captain **Marisa Maines**, "but people don't really appreciate it that much."

Maines added that many different people give ideas about the routines and then the coach, the captains and the girls decide as a group what looks and works best for the event.

The girls' biggest job is "getting the crowd involved into whatever is happening at the event in front of us," said senior co-captain **Taylor Griffin**.

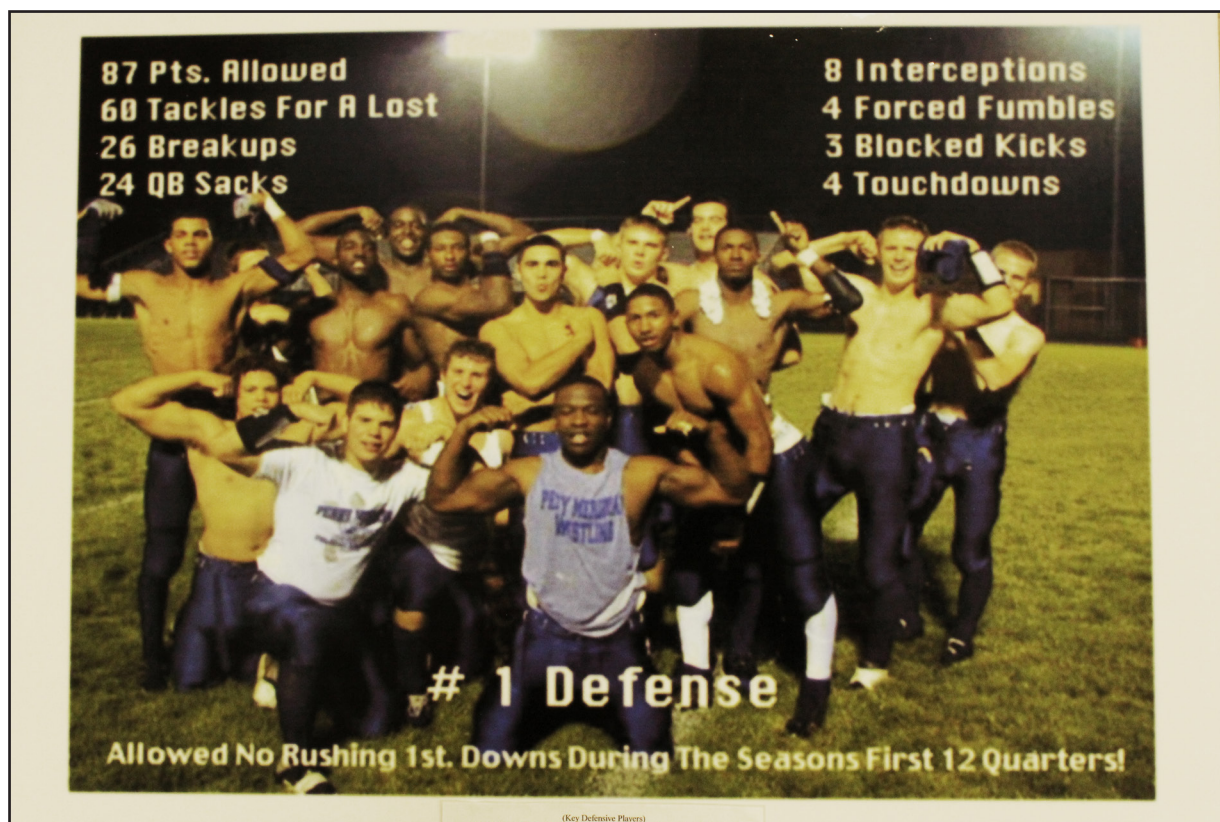


Senior Sarah Vanek practices with her bases seniors Taylor Griffin and Rachel Dukes and junior Erin Sims. Vanek, in light blue, is known as the flyer. While the girls in dark blue are bases (Photo by Ari Houston).



(Photo to the left) Cheerleaders, coaches and basketball players of 1976, pose for a smiling photo after winning the regional championship 71-58. Julie Boyd, pictured in the center, kneeling on the ground, smiles with her teammates after the game (Photo provided by Jerry Brown).

(Photo above) Junior varsity and varsity cheerleaders practice the Friday night choreography for the upcoming game. The cheerleaders will wear their uniforms to school and lead the crowd during the pep session which will take place during seventh period out in the stadium (Photo by Ari Houston).



School spirit: head coach Matthew Henninger and other key defensive players Terry Moore, Preston Davis, Eric Jackson, Aundre Jackson, Frank Duerson, Tyler Harmon, Tim LeMasters, Lavar Brown, Mark Ellis, Corey Pernell, Charles Jackson, Jared Moore and Travis Brunic pose for a picture (2002). The team only allowed 87 points the whole season (Photo provided by Matthew Henninger).